CLAIMS:

1.   (Previously presented) A method of handling personally identifiable information, said method comprising:

defining a limited number of privacy-related actions regarding said personally identifiable information;

constructing a rule for each of said privacy-related actions, wherein each rule defines an action corresponding to an associated privacy-related action, a logical condition that identifies a condition under which a particular decision is generated, and a decision indicating a manner by which said associated privacy-related action is to be performed;

creating a programming object containing a set of rules, wherein the set of rules comprises at least one of said constructed rules;

associating said programming object with said personally identifiable information;

processing a request using the programming object containing said set of rules, wherein processing said request comprises:

determining if said set of rules includes at least one rule having an action corresponding to an action specified in the request, a condition that evaluates to "true," and a decision that indicates that the action is authorized;

selecting a rule in the set of rules that has an action corresponding to said action specified in the request, said condition that evaluates to "true," and said decision that indicates that the action is authorized; and

providing an output based on selecting said rule in the set of rules.

2.   (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein said output is selected from the group consisting of

authorizing said privacy-related action,

authorizing said privacy-related action, plus specifying one or more tasks,

and denying said request but also suggesting what must be done to have said request approved.

3.   (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein said output includes the specification of at least one additional action that must be taken.

4.   (Previously presented) A system for handling personally identifiable information, said system comprising:

a processor; and

a memory coupled to the processor, wherein the memory stores instructions which, when executed by the processor, cause the processor to:

define a limited number of privacy-related actions regarding said personally identifiable information;

construct a rule for each of said privacy-related actions, wherein each rule defines an action corresponding to an associated privacy-related action, a logical condition that identifies a condition under which a particular decision is generated, and a decision indicating a manner by which said associated privacy-related action is to be performed;

create a programming object containing a set of rules, wherein the set of rules comprises at least one of said constructed rules;

associate said programming object with said personally identifiable information;

process a request using the programming object containing said set of rules, wherein processing said request comprises:

determining if said set of rules includes at least one rule having an action corresponding to an action specified in the request, a condition that evaluates to "true," and a decision that indicates that the action is authorized;

selecting a rule in the set of rules that has an action corresponding to said action specified in the request, said condition that evaluates to "true," and said decision that indicates that the action is authorized; and

providing an output based on selecting said rule in the set of rules.

5.   (Original) The system of Claim 4, wherein said output is selected from the group consisting of

authorizing said privacy-related action,

authorizing said privacy-related action, plus specifying one or more tasks,

and denying said request but also suggesting what must be done to have said request approved.

6.   (Original) The system of Claim 4, wherein said output includes the specification of at least one additional action that must be taken.

7.   (Previously presented) A computer program product comprising a computer-usable medium having a computer readable program for handling personally identifiable information, wherein the computer readable program, when executed on a computing device, causes the computing device to:

define a limited number of privacy-related actions regarding said personally identifiable information;

construct a rule for each of said privacy-related actions, wherein each rule defines an action corresponding to an associated privacy-related action, a logical condition that identifies a condition under which a particular decision is generated, and a decision indicating a manner by which said associated privacy-related action is to be performed;

create a programming object containing a set of rules, wherein the set of rules comprises at least one of said constructed rules;

associate said programming object with said personally identifiable information;

process a request using the programming object containing said set of rules, wherein processing said request comprises:

determining if said set of rules includes at least one rule having an action corresponding to an action specified in the request, a condition that evaluates to "true," and a decision that indicates that the action is authorized;

selecting a rule in the set of rules that has an action corresponding to said action specified in the request, said condition that evaluates to "true," and said decision that indicates that the action is authorized; and

providing an output based on selecting said rule in the set of rules.

8.   (Previously presented) The computer program product of Claim 7, wherein said output is selected from the group consisting of

authorizing said privacy-related action,

authorizing said privacy-related action, plus specifying one or more tasks,

and denying said request but also suggesting what must be done to have said request approved.

9. (Previously presented) The computer program product of Claim 7, wherein said output includes the specification of at least one additional action that must be taken.

10. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein processing a request using said programming object containing said set of rules further comprises:

identifying one or more tasks associated with said selected rule, if a decision of said rule indicates that said rule has associated tasks;

adding said one or more tasks specified for said privacy-related action to a list data structure associated with said programming object, wherein said list data structure contains one or more tasks for each rule associated with said programming data structure that has a decision indicating that said action identified in said request is authorized; and

returning, in said output, said list data structure associated with said programming object.

11. (Previously presented) The method of claim 10, wherein said identifying of one or more tasks, adding said one or more tasks to a list data structure, and returning said list data structure are performed if said selected rule has a decision indicating that said action associated with said rule is obligated.

12, (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein if a result of said determining if said set of rules includes at least one rule having an action corresponding to an action specified in said request, a condition that evaluates to "true," and a decision that indicates that said action is authorized, indicates that no such rule is present in said set of rules, said method further comprises:

denying said request;

searching for one or more suggestion rules in said set of rules that have an action corresponding to said action specified in said request, a condition that evaluates to "true," and a decision that indicates that a suggestion is to be provided; and

providing a suggestion, based on said one or more suggestion rules, indicating what operation needs to be performed in order for said action specified in said request to be authorized.

13.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said limited number of privacy-related actions define privacy-related actions that may be performed by one of a data subject that is identified by said personally identifiable information, a data user that requests access to said personally identifiable information, and a third party to which privacy-related notifications concerning said personally identifiable information may be sent.

14.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said programming object is an empty form programming object that represents a paper form that may be completed by a provider of said personally identifiable information.

15.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 14, wherein associating said programming object with said personally identifiable information comprises:

entering said personally identifiable information into fields of said empty form programming object, wherein said one or more rules of said programming object are applied to said personally identifiable information.

16.   (Previously presented) The system of claim 4, wherein said instructions further cause the processor to process a request using said programming object containing said set of rules by:

identifying one or more tasks associated with said selected rule, if a decision of said rule indicates that said rule has associated tasks;

adding said one or more tasks specified for said privacy-related action to a list data structure associated with said programming object, wherein said list data structure

contains one or more tasks for each rule associated with said programming data structure that has a decision indicating that said action identified in said request is authorized; and

returning, in said output, said list data structure associated with said programming object.

17.   (Previously presented) The system of claim 16, wherein said identifying of one or more tasks, adding said one or more tasks to a list data structure, and returning said list data structure are performed if said selected rule has a decision indicating that said action associated with said rule is obligated.

18.   (Previously presented) The system of claim 4, wherein if a result of said determining if said set of rules includes at least one rule having an action corresponding to an action specified in said request, a condition that evaluates to "true," and a decision that indicates that said action is authorized, indicates that no such rule is present in said set of rules, said instructions further cause the processor to:

deny said request;

search for one or more suggestion rules in said set of rules that have an action corresponding to said action specified in said request, a condition that evaluates to "true," and a decision that indicates that a suggestion is to be provided; and

provide a suggestion, based on said one or more suggestion rules, indicating what operation needs to be performed in order for said action specified in said request to be authorized.

19.   (Previously presented) The system of claim 4, wherein said programming object is an empty form programming object that represents a paper form that may be completed by a provider of said personally identifiable information.

20.   (Previously presented) The system of claim 19, wherein said instructions cause the processor to associate said programming object with said personally identifiable information by:

entering said personally identifiable information into fields of said empty form programming object, wherein said one or more rules of said programming object are applied to said personally identifiable information.